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Western Australians out front in information technology stakes

Latest findings released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) show that the number of Western Australian people, businesses and farms using information technology is growing strongly, particularly the number with Internet access.

A special article in **Western Australian Statistical Indicators, June Quarter 2001** shows that in 2000, more Western Australian adults accessed a computer or the Internet at home than at any other place. Just over half (51% or 685,000) of Western Australian adults actually used the home computer and just under one third (32% or 420,000) accessed the Internet from home (39% and 14% respectively in 1998).

Since 1998, the number of Western Australian households with home computer access increased by 35% compared with 24% nationally. In both Western Australia and nationally, the number of households with home Internet access more than doubled over the same two year period.

Almost three quarters (73% or 198,000) of Western Australian children aged 5 to 14 years used a computer at home in the 12 months to April 2000, while 28% (75,900) accessed the Internet from home.

At the end of June 2000, 75% of Western Australian businesses were using computers (up from 67% two years earlier) while 54% had Internet access (double the proportion at the end of June 1998).

In March 1999, 59% of the 14,038 Western Australian farms with an estimated value of agricultural operations of \$5,000 or more, owned or used a computer (up from 49% in March 1998) while 18% of farms were using the Internet (10% in March 1998).

Other points:

- Adults aged 18-24 years were much more likely to have used a computer or to have accessed the Internet (67% and 41% respectively) than those aged 55 years or more (25% and 13% respectively);
- adults with higher levels of qualification were more likely to have accessed IT. For example, those with a bachelor's degree (56%) were more than twice as likely to have accessed the Internet than those whose highest level of qualification was to complete secondary school (24%);
- the most common use reported by Western Australian adults for their home computer was work related purposes (52%) while, for accessing the Internet, it was using email or chat

sites (70%);

- 13% of adults paid bills or transferred funds via the Internet in 2000 (3% in 1999) while 8% were Internet shoppers (purchasing or ordering goods or services for private purposes over the Internet), up from 5% in 1999;
- 12% of adults accessed government services (Federal, State or local) via the Internet for private purposes, mainly to pay bills.

Details are in **Western Australian Statistical Indicators, June Quarter 2001** (cat. no. 1367.5), available from **ABS Bookshops**.

Additional points on IT from Western Australian Statistical Indicators, June Quarter 2001

Children aged 5-14 years

- for those accessing IT from home, computer and Internet access ranged from 63% and 14% respectively of 5-8 year olds to 82% and 44% (respectively) of 12-14 year olds;
- most used the home computer for school or educational activities (86%) and playing games (82%) whereas those accessing the Internet mostly did so for school or educational activities (83%);
- most used IT at school, a very high proportion (91%) using a computer while 2 in every 5 children accessed the Internet there.

Households

- households with children under 18 years of age were much more likely to have home computer and Internet access;
- for households without IT in 2000, most reported the main reasons as no need for a computer or the Internet, high costs or lack of interest.

Businesses

- just under 1 in 5 businesses (19%) at the end of June 2000 had a web site or home page;
- the most commonly cited reason for not using IT was that it was not suited to the nature of the business;
- of those business employing fewer than 5 persons, 67% used a computer and 43% accessed the Internet. This compares markedly with businesses employing 20 or more persons where virtually all used a computer and over 80% accessed the Internet;
- 47% of all Western Australian businesses were using the Internet to facilitate such business processes as the buying or selling of goods and services, banking or recruitment while 7% were receiving income from goods or services that were ordered via the Internet or a web site.

Farms

- Western Australia had the largest proportion of farms in the highest Internet cost bracket, with 22% paying more than \$500 each year for access while more than half (56%) paid more than \$250 a year in access costs (34% nationally);
- use of IT was most likely amongst the larger farms. Of farms with an estimated value of agricultural operations of \$1m or more, 32% accessed the Internet compared with 15% of farms with an estimated value of agricultural operations less than \$25,000;
- a small proportion (4% or 554 farms) of all Western Australian farms shopped on the Internet at some time during the year to March 1999.

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